

**From The Corporation for National Service:
The AmeriCorps Member Handbook
1998**

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*I will get things done for America to make our people safer, smarter, and healthier.
I will bring Americans together to strengthen our communities.
Faced with apathy, I will take action.
Faced with conflict, I will seek common ground.
Faced with adversity, I will persevere.
I will carry this commitment with me this year and beyond.
I am an AmeriCorps member, and I will get things done.*

- The AmeriCorps Member Pledge

Created in 1993, the Corporation for National Service is a public-private partnership that engages Americans of all ages in service through three national service initiatives- AmeriCorps, which includes more than 400 local and national programs, AmeriCorps*VISTA, and AmeriCorps*NCCC; the National Senior Service Corps, which includes Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions, and the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program; and Learn and Serve America, which provides models and resources for teachers integrating service into classrooms from kindergarten through college.

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FORWARD

Welcome to the AmeriCorps class of 1998! I salute you for answering the call to service. By joining AmeriCorps, you have set an example of caring and community spirit that America needs.

You are on a journey of discovery. This year you will discover not just America the Beautiful, from sea to shining sea. You will discover the America of hard problems and big challenges. And you will rediscover the secret heart of America and the secret of our success: the idea that it is better to serve than to be served.

As you begin your tour of duty, take to heart the watchwords of national service: getting things done. That's our mantra and our mandate. If we want to succeed, we have to get important things done that need to be done.

In rural areas and urban centers, whether tutoring students, working to reduce crime, protecting the environment, or helping immunize children, you will be meeting pressing needs and strengthening our communities. Together with the half million students engaged in the programs of Learn and Serve America and the half million older Americans in our Senior Corps, you are part of a powerful movement that is serving and changing America.

The recent President's Summit in Philadelphia set a great goal for our nation: to help millions of at-risk children get the resources they need to lead healthy, fulfilling, and productive lives. The campaign launched in Philadelphia is now underway, led by General Powell and backed by President Clinton and all the former Presidents. I hope you'll be an active part of that campaign-and become a champion for youth-a mentor, a tutor, a coach; an organizer of out-of-school programs; a teacher in hard-pressed schools; a recruiter, generator and leader of volunteers, especially of young people themselves.

As an AmeriCorps member, you represent America at its best. Good luck and thank you for your readiness to serve and lead our country.

Harris Wofford
Chief Executive Officer

Welcome to AmeriCorps! In becoming an AmeriCorps member, you have seized a unique and wonderful opportunity to make a real difference in the community or communities where you serve, to gain new skills, and to serve alongside others who, like you, are devoted to service.

You also now have a significant responsibility. As an AmeriCorps member, you are a representative of a national program of more than 25,000 men and women. Because you have made a commitment to serve, you are a role model for people of all ages in your community. Show others the importance of serving. Demonstrate what it means to be an active citizen. Provide opportunities for others to serve. Uphold and pass on the ethic of service-whether organizing a service project for local residents, telling others about your experience with AmeriCorps, or encouraging your friends to join AmeriCorps.

This handbook provides an overview of AmeriCorps, as well as important information about your rights and responsibilities, your education award, and ways you can make service a lifetime commitment. If you have questions about issues that are unclear or not covered in the handbook, please ask your project director. You can also receive up-to-date information on the AmeriCorps website- www.americorps.org

Best wishes for a productive and enjoyable year of "getting things done" as an AmeriCorps member.

Deb Jospin
Acting Director
AmeriCorps

AMERICORPS

AmeriCorps is the national service movement that engages Americans of all ages and backgrounds in service to address the most critical problems in our nation's communities in the areas of education, public safety, the environment, and other human needs. In exchange for a year of service, AmeriCorps members earn a living allowance and an education award to pay back student loans or to finance college, graduate school, or vocational training.

Through AmeriCorps*VISTA, AmeriCorps*NCCC, and AmeriCorps*State and National programs, AmeriCorps involves more than 25,000 committed men and women in results-driven community service.

Through the AmeriCorps*State and National programs, members serve in more than 400 national, state, and local nonprofit organizations in the areas of education, public safety, the environment, and other human needs.

AmeriCorps*State programs are administered by bipartisan state commissions appointed by governors through grants from, and in partnership with, the Corporation for National Service. Most members serve in local nonprofit organizations or education institutions, others serve in state or local government-sponsored programs.

In the AmeriCorps*National program, members serve in national or multi-state nonprofits that receive grants directly from the Corporation for National Service.

AmeriCorps*NCCC (the National Civilian Community Corps) is a 10-month, full-time residential service program for men and women age 18 to 24. While the primary focus is on the environment, AmeriCorps*NCCC members also work in education, public safety, and other areas of community needs. AmeriCorps*NCCC combines the best practices of civilian service with key aspects of military service, including leadership and team building. Campuses are located in Charleston, S.C.; Denver, Colo.; Perry Point, Md.; San Diego, Calif.; and Washington, D.C.

AmeriCorps*VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) serves economically challenged communities. For more than 30 years, AmeriCorps*VISTA members have helped increase the capability of people to improve the conditions of their own lives through literacy programs, housing assistance, health education, entrepreneurship, employment training, and neighborhood revitalization. Members of AmeriCorps*VISTA work full-time and live in the communities they serve, creating programs that will continue after they complete their service.

THE MISSION OF AMERICORPS

The mission of AmeriCorps is to provide opportunities for Americans of all ages to help improve the nation through service to communities-making our environment cleaner, our children healthier, our schools better, and our streets safer. A special emphasis of AmeriCorps is on the critical problems of children and youth, and the need for all young people to serve, not just be served. A large proportion of AmeriCorps members serve in programs seeking to achieve the goals for America's youth set at the 1996 President's Summit for America's Future. AmeriCorps works on the simple idea that those who take responsibility for their community ought to be rewarded with opportunity.

The four main objectives of AmeriCorps are:

Getting Things Done. AmeriCorps members help communities solve problems in the areas of education, public safety, the environment, and other human needs, both through their own direct service and by mobilizing the volunteer service of other Americans.

Strengthening Communities. AmeriCorps unites individuals from all different backgrounds-and organizations of different kinds-in a common effort to improve our communities.

Encouraging Responsibility. AmeriCorps encourages members to explore and exercise their responsibilities to their communities, their families, and themselves-during their service experience and throughout their lives.

Expanding Opportunity. AmeriCorps helps those who help America. AmeriCorps members receive awards to further their education or to pay back their student loans-as well as invaluable job experience, specialized training, and life skills.

If you have questions about how your program helps fulfill the overall mission and objectives of AmeriCorps, discuss it with your fellow members or your project director. And if you have suggestions about how AmeriCorps can better serve the nation and the communities in which you work, please discuss them with your project director, the state commission on service in your state, and the staff at the Corporation for National Service.

THE HISTORY OF NATIONAL SERVICE

AmeriCorps: Getting Things Done

National service changes communities and those who serve. Since AmeriCorps was created, nearly 70,000 Americans have served as AmeriCorps members. Following are just a few examples of the projects AmeriCorps members have participated in-and the results they have achieved.

Education

Through Twenty-First Century Scholars, AmeriCorps members in Indiana mentored, counseled, and provided academic achievement sessions for Scholars, who were 8th- to 12th-grade low-income students. In exchange for a full, state-sponsored tuition scholarship, Scholars pledged to maintain a 2.0 grade point average, applied for financial aid, and abstained from drugs and alcohol. AmeriCorps members kept Scholars on track, mobilized the community, recruited volunteers, led Scholars and their parents in service projects, and worked with counselors and teachers to build strong support between families and schools. AmeriCorps members have already counseled 7,260 Scholars, tutored more than 450 Scholars, mentored more than 800 Scholars, and recruited over 1,000 volunteers.

AmeriCorps*VISTA members established and expanded education programs that serve at-risk children and the growing population of illiterate adults. In Washington, D.C., as a part of the America Reads Challenge, AmeriCorps*VISTA members served in elementary and high schools, pairing community volunteers with students and establishing family resource centers. AmeriCorps*VISTA members recruited and coordinated volunteers and managed communications between parents, teachers, tutors, and students. Other members worked as service-learning coordinators in Washington's high schools, helping students effectively fulfill their community service requirements.

Environment

AmeriCorps*NCCC members worked with 28 agencies on five projects to help restore the Chesapeake Bay. Members were involved in shoreline and beach restoration, erosion control, fish migration, and spawning efforts. They also worked with at-risk youth to survey the area, identifying 27 pollutants. A 20-minute video that was produced about the project has been presented to more than 600 students.

AmeriCorps*VISTA members created environmental awareness programs to educate communities about improving and controlling the quality of their environment. In Fort Valley, Ga., an AmeriCorps*VISTA member focused on environmental health issues in coordination with an environmental education center. AmeriCorps members organized fundraising and public relations for the center and coordinated with local businesses, churches, and other community groups to develop environmental awareness.

Public Safety

During the 1996 Olympics and Paralympics, AmeriCorps*NCCC members worked with the City of Atlanta and Olympic officials to assist with projects in senior citizens' housing facilities. Teams also assisted in retrofitting Olympic facilities in preparation for the Paralympics, provided crowd and security control, and helped supervise volunteers.

Through the Neutral Zone, supported by the Boeing Corporation, AmeriCorps members in the state of Washington worked on problems of juvenile crime, gang activity, school success, and youth homelessness. In the program's first year, violent crime in Mountainlake Terrace, Wash., decreased by 30 percent. The Neutral Zone offered a late-night program for 300 to 400 high-risk youth, a street school operating six days a week, out-of-school-time activities for K-12 youth, and a program to enhance student success in schools.

Disaster Relief

AmeriCorps*NCCC teams have been trained by the U.S. Forest Service for forest fire suppression and are part of the National Emergency Response Network. Members fought the Idaho Thunderbolt Fire in Boise National Forest and may be called at a moment's notice to respond to potentially devastating fires across the nation.

Through the Red Cross Rapid Response Corps, skilled and experienced teams of AmeriCorps members are deployed anywhere in the nation or its territories, when a disaster occurs. When not responding to disasters, AmeriCorps members worked throughout the Los Angeles basin continuing recovery work from the 1994 earthquake, assisting with local disasters, and providing earthquake preparedness training to underserved populations. To date, the Rapid Response Corps has responded to eight national disasters, including flooding in West Virginia, Washington, Ohio, Kentucky, and California, tornadoes in Arkansas, and a hurricane in the U.S. Virgin Islands. They have also provided assistance to more than 450 families and reached more than 240,000 members of the greater Los Angeles community with disaster preparedness education and training.

Other Human Needs

AmeriCorps members serving with the Nashville Health Corps helped to improve the health of children of low-income families by advising parents on proper nutrition and early childhood health, assessing family health risks, and increasing access to health education. Through home visits to teenage girls and other high-risk women, the AmeriCorps members provided information and support on a wide variety of needs, including immunization, nutrition, growth, and development, and gave referrals to appropriate services. AmeriCorps members made a vital contribution to achieve remarkable results: 95 percent of the children they served are fully immunized, more than 80 percent are growing at their normal weight and height, and 99 percent are free from abuse and neglect.

AmeriCorps*VISTA members recruited local volunteers to repair, renovate, and expand existing housing, or to construct new homes at affordable rates. AmeriCorps*VISTA members worked with Habitat for Humanity to build houses in the colonias-unincorporated rural housing located along the Texas-Mexico border in McAllen, Texas. Using their Spanish language skills, AmeriCorps*VISTA members coordinated community outreach, fundraising activities, and volunteer recruitment and placement. This is just one of the Habitat for Humanity projects in which several hundred AmeriCorps members serve.

Service is and always has been a vital force in American life. From the American Revolution to the Civil Rights Movement and from the smallest farms to the largest cities, Americans have worked together to improve their communities and their lives.

America's tradition of service has always had strong roots in its communities. The country's vast network of civic and religious organizations; schools, colleges, and universities; and businesses and labor unions has brought people together to meet common goals. Since the nineteenth century, foreign observers have noticed how through these groups and other citizen action Americans have shown an unusual commitment to service-whether starting educational institutions, building new homes, protecting public spaces, or helping those in need.

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Congress created the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Four million young people joined in response-restoring the nation's parks, revitalizing the economy, and supporting their families and themselves. Through 11 years of Depression, the CCC provided millions of dollars in services and enabled millions of families to live in dignity.

With World War II, the GI Bill linked service to education, offering educational opportunity in return for service to the country. Through the GI Bill, millions of veterans improved their own lives by attending college. They also contributed to America's future. With the education they received, they helped to park the economic boom that gave America the world's leading economy. The principles of the CCC and the GI Bill-encouraging Americans to serve and rewarding those who do-inspire AmeriCorps today, including AmeriCorps*NCCC, which is directly carrying on the heritage of the CCC.

The call to service from President John Kennedy led to the formation of the Peace Corps. In the last 36 years, almost 150,000 Peace Corps volunteers have left the comforts of home and traveled to the poorest corners of the globe, teaching, helping farmers feed the hungry, and taking health care to remote areas. After meeting vital needs overseas, returned Peace Corps volunteers have put to work at home their new knowledge and spirit of citizenship, changing America for the better.

The 1960s also saw the birth of Volunteers in Service to America, or VISTA, which is now part of the AmeriCorps family. Originally authorized in 1964 by the Economic Opportunity Act, VISTA has provided full-time members to thousands of low-income communities across the nation to address a multitude of problems as defined by those communities. By the time VISTA celebrated its 30th anniversary in 1994, nearly 100,000 VISTA volunteers had served in more than 12,000 projects in an effort to build communities and help Americans achieve self-reliance.

Then came the Foster Grandparent Program, the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), and the Senior Companion Program. Together, these programs engaged older Americans, using their experience, skills, talents, and interests in a variety of service activities. Today, they constitute the National Senior Service Corps-AmeriCorps' partner in the Corporation for National Service-with approximately half a million older Americans in service.

The 1970s also saw the birth of ACTION, a new federal volunteer agency. Transferred from the Office of Economic Opportunity, VISTA joined the Foster Grandparent Program, the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program, and the Senior Companion Program under the ACTION administration.

In the 1970s and 1980s, a variety of programs at the local, state, and national levels expanded to offer young people opportunities to serve. Youth corps, conservation and service corps, and school-and college-based programs energized young people in service to their communities. The movement for service-learning grew in primary and secondary schools and in colleges and universities. In the 1990s, Congress gave new impetus to this

movement in the national service legislation, establishing the Learn and Serve America grant program-the vital third part of the Corporation for National Service.

Twenty years later, President George Bush signed the National and Community Service Act of 1990. Building upon this, in 1993, President Bill Clinton proposed legislation to expand opportunities for Americans to serve their communities and to earn awards for their own education in return. Congress enacted the National and Community Service Act, creating the Corporation for National Service. President Clinton signed the legislation on September 21, 1993, and AmeriCorps was launched the following year.

THE CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL SERVICE

The Corporation for National Service administers AmeriCorps. The program's expenses-such as the education award and other forms of member support-are provided through appropriations from Congress and support from local and private sector partners.

The Corporation for National Service offers a range of national and community service opportunities for Americans to serve full-time or part-time. In addition to AmeriCorps, the Corporation also oversees the service-learning programs of Learn and Serve America and the three programs of the National Senior Service Corps.

Learn and Serve America engages students from kindergarten through college in community projects that integrate service and learning. Learn and Serve America builds on the grassroots service-learning movement by promoting service as a learning opportunity and providing models and resources to schools, universities, and community groups. Students use academic skills to solve real-world problems and learn the value of service, citizenship, and responsibility.

In Learn and Serve's School-Based Programs, schools plan, implement, and expand service activities for elementary and secondary students. Schools also use Learn and Serve America grants for adult volunteer programs and teacher training.

In Learn and Serve America's Community-Based Programs, nonprofit community organizations implement, expand, and multiply service-learning programs in local communities. Participants are between the ages of 5 and 17 and include students and youth who are not in school.

In Learn and Serve America's Higher Education Programs, colleges and universities help create and strengthen community service and service-learning initiatives. A wide array of students and organizations collaborate to address community needs. Grants also support technical assistance for expanding the field of service-learning.

The National Senior Service Corps, or "Senior Corps," engages a half million Americans age 55 and older in results-driven service as Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions, and volunteers in the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). The Senior Corps taps the vast wealth of experience, skills, and talents of older citizens to meet community challenges.

Through the Foster Grandparent Program, some 24,000 older Americans serve as extended family members to nearly 80,000 children and youth with exceptional needs. Usually working at least 20 hours a week, Foster Grandparents serve in schools, hospitals, correctional institutions, and Head Start and day care centers. They help children who have been abused or neglected, mentor troubled teenagers and young mothers, and care for premature infants or children with physical disabilities.

Senior Companions-some 12,000 strong-provide assistance and friendship to seniors who have difficulty with daily living tasks, helping them live independently in their homes instead of moving to more costly institutionalized care. They usually serve two to four clients during their 20 hours of weekly service. Senior Companions receive monthly training in various medical topics-and alert doctors and family members of potential health problems.

RSVP is one of the largest volunteer efforts in the nation-matching programs that need volunteers with some 450,000 older Americans serving part-time and unpaid. Volunteers

organize neighborhood watch programs, tutor teenagers, renovate homes, teach English to immigrants, assist victims of natural disasters, and do whatever else their skills and interests lead them to do.

The Corporation for National Service is structured to keep most of the decision making at the state and local level. The programs in which AmeriCorps members serve work as partners with the Corporation for National Service to "get things done," build community, and meet common goals. The national office is focused on oversight and evaluation to ensure that all AmeriCorps programs are meeting their goals. State Commissions on National and Community Service or similar entities appointed by the Governor of each state have significant responsibilities for the Corporation's programs. Most AmeriCorps members serve in local public and private nonprofit organizations, competitively selected by the State Commissions. With AmeriCorps*National Direct programs, the Corporation makes the grants through a national competition, but the selection and supervision of members are the responsibility of the national or multi-state nonprofits.

AmeriCorps*NCCC is the only program in which members are recruited, selected, and administered by Corporation staff, on the NCCC campuses. With AmeriCorps*VISTA, in most cases the assignment of positions to local nonprofits is made by the Corporation's state offices, but in all cases the supervision of AmeriCorps*VISTA members is by those local organizations.

The Corporation seeks to ensure that all programs achieve certain goals and that programs have the flexibility to meet those goals. The Corporation for National Service and the programs in which AmeriCorps members serve operate in accordance with the principles of equal opportunity and do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, or political affiliation.

AMERICORPS POLICIES

Rights and Responsibilities

Like any group of individuals working together, AmeriCorps members must follow certain rules and regulations in order to be effective. The rights and responsibilities listed below are not inclusive, and project directors, team leaders, and project sponsors may identify other important procedures.

Rights

- All members have a right to participate in AmeriCorps programs on the basis of equal opportunity and merit.
- Members will not be discriminated against or harassed on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, or political affiliation.
- Members have a right to reasonable accommodation for disabilities. AmeriCorps programs will furnish reasonable accommodations for the known physical and mental limitations of qualified members.
- AmeriCorps members who believe their rights have been violated may report such violations to the directors of their programs, who must establish and maintain a procedure for filing and adjudicating certain grievances. Members may also file discrimination-related grievances with the Equal Opportunity Counselor of the Corporation for National Service at (202) 606-5000, ext. 312 (voice), or (202) 606-5256 (TDD).

Responsibilities

- In order to earn an education award, each AmeriCorps member must satisfactorily complete the term of service (at least 1700 hours during a 9- to 12-month period for the full-time award and at least 900 hours over a one- to two-year period of time for the part-time award) for the AmeriCorps program in which he or she is participating.
- Satisfactory service includes attendance, adherence to general laws, a positive attitude, quality service, and respect toward others in the program and in the community.
- AmeriCorps members may be asked to sign contracts stating their rights and responsibilities while in AmeriCorps. Members must abide by their contracts and follow the rules of their specific program. Programs may suspend or terminate members who violate the stated rules of behavior.

Prohibited Activities

There are certain activities, including lobbying, political, or advocacy activities, that AmeriCorps members and staff may not perform in the course of their duties, while charging time to the AmeriCorps program, or at the request of program staff. Furthermore, members and staff may not engage in any conduct in a manner that would associate the national service program or the Corporation with the prohibited activities. Programs must become familiar with the specific prohibitions described in the Corporation's formal regulations (45 C.F.R. 2520.30) and the grant provisions. The list of these prohibited activities includes:

- engaging in any effort to influence legislation, including state or local ballot initiatives or lobbying for your AmeriCorps program;
- organizing a letter-writing campaign to Congress;
- engaging in partisan political activities, or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office;
- printing politically charged articles in a Corporation-funded newsletter;
- taking part in political demonstrations or rallies; and
- organizing or participating in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes.

Other prohibited activities include:

- assisting or deterring union organizing;
- engaging in religious instruction, conducting worship services, or engaging in any form of religious proselytization;
- impairing existing contracts or collective bargaining agreements;
- activities that pose a significant safety risk to participants;
- assignments that displace employees (see Employee Displacement);
- placement of members in internships with for-profit businesses as part of the education and training component of the program; and
- providing assistance to a business organized for profit.

AmeriCorps members, like other private citizens, may participate in lobbying, political, or advocacy activities on their own time, at their own expense, and at their own initiative. However, members may not wear AmeriCorps service gear in such instances.

AmeriCorps members are expected to maintain a code of conduct and professional behavior at all times. Violations of this expectation could result in early termination or suspension.

EDUCATION AWARDS

The GI Bill from the 1940s serves as a model for the AmeriCorps education award. The idea behind the GI Bill was the principle of reciprocity: in return for exceptional service by its citizens, the nation invests in their higher education. Helping AmeriCorps members finance their education is an investment in their future and the future of this country.

To qualify for an education award, members must successfully complete the required term of service for the program in which they are participating. The term of service varies among different programs. Under special circumstances, members may receive a prorated award in the event that they are unable to complete their full term of service.

The amount of the award depends on whether the term of service is full-time or part-time. The full-time award is \$4,725 and the part-time award is \$2,362. A member who serves in a "reduced part-time term of service"-for example, a summer program-will receive an award that is proportional to the number of hours served. Even if a member completes more than two terms of service, he or she may not receive more than two education awards-regardless of whether they are for full-time, part-time, or reduced part-time terms of service.

Education awards can be used to pay back qualified student loans and to pay for the cost of attending a qualified institution of higher education or the expenses incurred in participating in an approved school-to-work program. Not all schools or loans are eligible. The payment will be made to the school, program, or loan holder designated by the member. (It cannot be made to the AmeriCorps member.) Schools, however, may reimburse students for certain expenses they paid out-of-pocket. Members can split up their award to pay a combination of student loans and/or educational expenses. You have seven years from the end of your term of service to use the awards.

"Qualified student loan" is defined in the law as a loan backed by the federal government under Title IV of the Higher Education Act (except PLUS loans to parents of students) or under Titles VII or VIII of the Public Health Service Act. Education awards cannot be used to repay any other loans, even if the loan was obtained for educational purposes.

Some of the most common qualified loans are:

- Stafford Loans
- Perkins Loans
- Federal Direct Loans
- Supplemental Loans for Students (SLS)
- Federal Consolidated Loans
- Health Education Assistance Loans (HEAL)
- Health Professions Student Loans (HPSL)

The awards are provided from a special account in the United States Treasury called the National Service Trust, which is managed by the Corporation for National Service. Education awards are subject to income taxes in the calendar year they are used. Although the Corporation will not deduct taxes, it will send you a Form 1099 to be used in preparing income tax returns in late January to all AmeriCorps members who have made payments from their education awards or for their accrued interest during the previous year. 1099 Forms (Miscellaneous Income) reflect the amounts that the National Service Trust reports to the IRS as taxable, miscellaneous income.

Loan Postponement or Forbearance

All AmeriCorps members are eligible to receive forbearance on most qualified student loans, meaning members do not have to make payments while in service. Specific loaning institutions will determine which loans qualify for forbearance. In order to obtain forbearance, you must apply directly to the loan holder with a request "for forbearance in the repayment" of loans at the beginning of your service with AmeriCorps.

Once loans have been qualified, the loan holder will give you a form that must be completed and sent to the National Service Trust for verification of service participation. The Trust will fill out its portion and return it to the loan holder. In order for the Trust to proceed, your enrollment form must have been sent to the Corporation for National Service.

AmeriCorps members who successfully complete their term of service will be exempt from paying the interest that accrues on qualified student loans while they are serving. After your service, the interest that accrued while you were serving as an AmeriCorps member will be paid by the Corporation for National Service.

In order to have this interest paid, you must mail a bill or statement from their lender that shows the total amount of interest that accrued (or the daily amount accrued), as well as the dates of the forbearance period to National Service Trust. Since these are benefits beyond the education award, interest payments will not be deducted from the amount of the award.

Unless an AmeriCorps member is released from service for compelling personal circumstances, the National Service Trust cannot pay any interest accrued during the period if you do not complete your full term of service. But if you leave AmeriCorps before completing your service, you should check with your lender to determine whether the student loan qualifies for another type of deferment.

Compelling Personal Circumstances

Directors of individual programs determine the compelling personal circumstances under which AmeriCorps members may be released from a term of service. Examples of circumstances that may be considered are serious injury or illness to the member, the death of an immediate family member, or the premature termination of the program or other programmatic problems beyond the member's control. Reasons such as dissatisfaction with assignments, the desire to return to school, to move to another part of the country, or to take a job, however, would not ordinarily justify such a release.

At the discretion of the program, an AmeriCorps member who completes at least 15% of his or her service (or 255 hours of full-time service) and is released for compelling personal reasons may receive a prorated award, based on the length of service. For example, if a member serves four months and then departs due to a serious illness, a \$1,575 education award, representing one-third of \$4,725, would be earned. AmeriCorps members who quit for other reasons or who are released for cause are not eligible for any portion of the award. Another option when leaving for compelling personal circumstances is to resume your service within two years of your release.

Members may also lose their eligibility for their education award if they are removed from their project due to misconduct. If you drop out without obtaining a release for compelling personal circumstances or if you are convicted of a felony or the sale or distribution of a controlled substance during a term of service, not only will you lose the

education award, but the Corporation will also refuse payment on any interest that accrued if you had obtained loan forbearance. Additionally, you may be disqualified from future service through AmeriCorps.

Remember, education awards are in return for successfully completing one year of service. If you have additional questions about your education award, you may either call (202)606-5000, ext. 347, or write the National Service Trust at the Corporation for National Service. For questions regarding student financial aid programs, including outstanding loans, you should contact either your campus student financial aid office or the Department of Education at (800) 4FEDAID (800) 433-3243.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Living Allowance

The living allowance provided to AmeriCorps members varies among programs. The allowance is intended to assist with basic necessities during your service. It is not a wage. Most full-time members receive an annual allowance between \$8,340 and \$16,680, which is paid in increments, such as weekly or bi-weekly.

Taxes

The programs in which AmeriCorps member serve withhold personal income tax from member living allowances, requiring each member to complete a W-4 form at the beginning of the term of service as well as a W-2 form at the close of the tax year. These programs also withhold FICA taxes from the living allowance. The Corporation mails a W-2 form to all AmeriCorps members by January 31 of each year showing them the status of their education award.

Educational Support

AmeriCorps members receive educational support services. Members who have not completed their high school education will be provided support to obtain a high school diploma or GED certificate before completing their term of service. Some programs may also provide college readiness programs for members going on to higher education. Similarly, programs may offer assistance with resume writing and preparation of college applications and may work with local employers to arrange job interviews or job placement. Because education is a priority, AmeriCorps members must have their GEDs, or have obtained a waiver, to receive their education awards.

Health Care

Programs must provide health care coverage to all full-time members who do not have adequate health care coverage at the time of enrollment or who lose coverage due to participation in the program. In addition, programs must provide health care coverage if a full-time member loses coverage during the term of service through no deliberate act of his or her own, such as a parent's or spouse's job loss. If programs already carry minimum benefits as defined below and at a reasonable cost, they may use existing policies to cover members. If programs wish to use their existing policies, they must send a copy of the policy and a summary of its coverage and cost to the state commission, national parent organization, or Corporation program officer (for Tribes and Territories). Members who are also enrolled tribal members may use Indian Health Service (IHS) for their health coverage. The Corporation will not cover health care costs for family members.

At minimum, member policies must cover physician services for illness or injury, hospital room and board, emergency room care, x-ray and laboratory costs, prescription drugs, mental or nervous conditions (may be limited), and substance abuse (may be limited). In addition, member policies must include the following: an annual deductible of not more than \$250 per individual; a co-pay requirement of not more than 20 percent or a comparable fixed fee; an out-of-pocket expenditure of not more than \$1,000 per individual; and a lifetime maximum benefit of at least \$50,000 for each occurrence or cause.

Child Care

Eligible full-time AmeriCorps members may have a child care subsidy while they are participating in national service. In order to receive the subsidy, the member's family must be income-eligible and the child's caregiver must be considered a legal provider of the state. AmeriCorps will pay up to 100 percent of the current market rate of child care costs for eligible members who select qualified child care providers. Reimbursement rates and eligibility will be based on locally established guidelines under the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG), a federally funded program administered by each state.

Although individual program directors determine member eligibility, all members requesting child care must be the parents or custodians of dependents under 13 years of age who reside with them; must need child care in order to participate in AmeriCorps; and have a family income that does not exceed the state's income eligibility guidelines. Members are not eligible to receive child care from AmeriCorps while they are receiving other child care subsidies.

AmeriCorps Training

Most AmeriCorps members receive training throughout their service to ensure the success in their work and to foster personal and professional development. Members may undergo pre-service, in-service, and close-of-service training as determined by their specific program.

At the start of their service, AmeriCorps members may participate in an intense orientation session. During this orientation, members will review basic policies and procedures, undergo training for their assigned service activities, and be introduced to the AmeriCorps network, the history of service, and the role of citizenship and volunteering. In addition, members may be trained in communication, conflict resolution, and CPR/first aid.

The programs in which AmeriCorps members serve must as a whole allocate at least 80 percent of the required member participation to service activities and no more than 20 percent of the required service hours to education, training, and other non-service activities. The recruitment, mobilization, and leadership of students or community volunteers by an AmeriCorps service-learning coordinator, for example, is a focus of important service and would be counted as part of the 80%. Because the rule applies to programs and not to individuals, there can be minor differences among members in how much time is spent in non-service activities. Members should not be assigned to administrative duties unless incidental to the service activities.

Administrative Procedures

Grievance Procedures. During an AmeriCorps member's service, a situation may arise that directly affects the member's work situation, or that the member believes violates regulations governing the terms and conditions of service resulting in a denial or infringement of a right or benefit to the member. Because grievance procedures vary among programs, you should direct specific questions to your project director.

Voting. AmeriCorps members are encouraged to register to vote and exercise their voting privileges. If you are unable to vote before or after your assigned hours of service, you will be given an opportunity to do so without incurring any penalties.

Jury Duty. Serving on a jury is a significant responsibility of citizenship. Accordingly, members are encouraged to serve on jury duty when called and will not be penalized for doing so. During the duration of jury duty, members will continue both to accrue their normal service hours and to receive their living allowance and health benefits.

Service in the Armed Forces Reserves. Generally, the Reserves of the U.S. Army, U.S. Navy, U.S. Air Force, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Coast Guard, the Army National Guard, and the Air National Guard requires reservists to serve one weekend a month plus 12 to 15 days a year. If involved AmeriCorps members are able to choose when to fulfill their annual two-week active duty requirement, they should try not to disrupt their AmeriCorps service. In instances where the dates of active duty are inflexible and conflict with AmeriCorps service, members will be granted a leave of absence for the two-week period of active duty. However, members will not receive time-off for additional Reserves-related service beyond the two weeks. Although AmeriCorps members will be credited with service hours and will continue to receive their living allowance and health care coverage while fulfilling their two-week period of active duty, they will not earn service credit for the once-a-month weekend service in the Reserves.

Your AmeriCorps experience is only one moment in a lifetime of service opportunities. You may want to commit yourself to another term as an AmeriCorps member or pursue other service options in your community. For example, you may want to volunteer through your school, nearby Voluntary Action Centers (1-800-879-5400), or other local organizations. Or you may choose to work independently, forming your own service projects. Regardless of the path you choose, as an AmeriCorps graduate, you will have a unique opportunity to transform your communities and shape the future of America.

The Recruitment Office at the Corporation for National Service relies on alumni to spread the word about AmeriCorps. (The Recruitment Office may be reached at (202) 606-5000, ext. 566.)

Another option if you want to remain in the AmeriCorps network is to apply to the AmeriCorps Leaders Program. AmeriCorps leaders are exceptional members who have completed a year of service and wish to develop their skills, increase program effectiveness, and build connections among AmeriCorps programs. Leaders receive further intensive training and then act as frontline member supervisors and team leaders. They earn an increased living allowance, continuing health care benefits, and a second education award. If you are interested, call (202) 606-5000, ext. 192, for more information.

STAYING INVOLVED

While your AmeriCorps service may end after a year or two, your service to your community may continue for decades. Your year in AmeriCorps may be only one moment in a lifetime of service.

One part of the AmeriCorps ethic that you may reflect throughout your life is taking responsibility. You may take responsibility by doing your part for your family and friends, by making the most of yourself, and by remaining engaged in your community. And of course there are many ways you may take responsibility that no handbook can ever describe—that only you may know, through the unique experiences of your life.

One way to take responsibility is to continue your service in the future. You may be able to reapply to AmeriCorps through your current program, or you may contact the Corporation for National Service at (800) 942-2677 or TDD (800) 833-3722 to get information about other programs in which you might serve.

If you want to develop your service leadership skills, you may be eligible to be nominated for the AmeriCorps Leaders Program. This year-long leadership development program is for outstanding graduates of AmeriCorps*VISTA, AmeriCorps*NCCC, and any other AmeriCorps program, as well as alumni of Learn and Serve.

During the year, AmeriCorps Leaders participate in a series of competency-based training events with curricula that are designed to develop professional skills and enhance the effectiveness of the service site where the Leader serves. AmeriCorps Leaders earn a living allowance of \$14,880 and they receive health benefits and the education award. If you would like to be nominated for an AmeriCorps Leaders position next year, please call (202) 606-5000, ext. 540.

Even if you don't join AmeriCorps next year, you may continue contributing to your community in many other ways. You may want to contact your school, a nearby Voluntary Action Center (toll free at 1-800-879-5400), or other local organizations to find out how to stay involved. Or you may pursue your own dream for transforming your community and your country. America's future is in your hands.

GLOSSARY OF AMERICORPS TERMS

AmeriCorps- The national service initiative organized by the Corporation for National Service in which full-time and part-time members serve in more than a thousand service programs.

These programs in which members serve have four common goals for AmeriCorps service:

1. Getting Things Done through direct and demonstrable service that meets communities' education, public safety, environmental, and other human needs.
2. Strengthening Communities by bringing together Americans of all ages and backgrounds in the common effort to improve our communities.
3. Encouraging Responsibility by encouraging members to explore and exercise their responsibilities toward their communities, their families, and themselves. 4.)
4. Expanding Opportunity by enhancing members' educational opportunities, job experience, and life skills. In return for full- or part-time service, AmeriCorps members may receive post-service education awards.

AmeriCorps*National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC)-

AmeriCorps*NCCC is a ten-month, full-time residential service and leadership program for men and women age 18 to 24. Members meet education, public safety, and other community needs, with a special focus on the environment. AmeriCorps*NCCC combines civilian service with the ethic of military service, including leadership and team building. AmeriCorps*NCCC campuses are located in San Diego, Calif.; Denver, Colo.; Charleston, S.C.; Perryville, Md.; and Washington, D.C.

AmeriCorps*VISTA- AmeriCorps*VISTA has served America's economically challenged communities for more than 30 years. Members increase the capability of people to improve their lives through employment training, literacy programs, housing assistance, health education, entrepreneurship, and neighborhood revitalization. All AmeriCorps*VISTA members live in the communities they serve.

AmeriCorps Leaders- AmeriCorps leaders are promising leaders in the field of service who are nominated for the program toward the end of their first term as an AmeriCorps member. During their year-long training program, they receive formal classroom training as well as hands-on, experiential training while serving in a leadership role at a service site. Graduates of national service programs are eligible to be chosen for the AmeriCorps Leaders Program.

AmeriCorps member- An individual who is selected to serve in a national service position in a program authorized by AmeriCorps and who is eligible at the end of service to receive an education award.

AmeriCorps national service network- The network of all AmeriCorps programs, including AmeriCorps*State and National, AmeriCorps*NCCC, and AmeriCorps*VISTA. education award-A benefit of \$4,725 (full-time) or \$2,363.50 (part-time) that AmeriCorps members may receive after successful completion of a term of service. The award is paid directly to a lending or educational institution and may be used to pay off qualified education loans or to finance qualified college, graduate school, or vocational school training.

National Service Trust- A trust fund in the United States Treasury Department, administered by the Corporation for National Service, as established by the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, to finance AmeriCorps member education awards.

State commissions- The 15- to 25-member, independent, bipartisan commissions appointed by Governors to implement service programs in the states. Each state commission receives funding from the Corporation for National Service and is led by an executive director. The state commission's duties include developing a unified state plan for service, submitting the state's overall applications to the Corporation, making the primary grant decisions for most of the AmeriCorps positions in state and local organizations, and overseeing these grant programs.

National parent organizations- National nonprofits that operate an AmeriCorps grant for AmeriCorps members serving in more than one state, funded through the AmeriCorps*National Direct programs.